

(3) fervently urges elected officials and public servants, who have condoned and legitimized the Reverend Al Sharpton's incendiary words and actions, to publicly denounce and condemn such racist and anti-Semitic views.

NUNS ATTACKED IN INDIA, SAVED BY SIKH FAMILY

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, the wave of violence against Christians by Hindu fundamentalists continues. Since Christmas 1998, churches have been burned, priests have been murdered, nuns have been raped, and Christian schools and prayer halls have been destroyed. The government of Orissa now requires anyone who wishes to change religions to get a permit from the government. Sikhs and Muslims have previously been subjected to similar tyranny.

These attacks have been carried out by Hindu fundamentalists who belong to a branch of the RSS, an openly Fascist umbrella organization that includes the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party under its umbrella.

In the most recent incident, a gang of RSS militants attacked the Convent of Our Lady of Grace in Panipat. Previously, a priest from the same complex had been murdered. This is the fourth attack on the church in Panipat, according to The Deccan Herald.

Fortunately, when the militant Hindus attacked the convent, the nuns screamed and the alarm went off, attracting the attention of the Sikh family next door. They got their gun and came over to the complex, where the RSS mob attacked the rescuers using steel rods and guns. One of the attackers was captured.

Unfortunately, this incident shows us again that there is no religious freedom in India. Hindu nationalist mobs associated with the ruling party have free rein to commit these acts of violence against the religious minorities and they rarely get any punishment from the government. Instead, the government uses these incidents to try to set one religious group against the other so that they can continue their brutal, intolerant, tyrannical rule. In the murder of missionary Graham Staines, which was carried out by Hindu militants chanting "Victory to Hanuman," a Hindu god, the government arrested a man who uses the alias Dara Singh in order to blame the Sikhs.

This kind of intolerance is unacceptable. As the lone superpower and the beacon of freedom in the world, the United States must act to bring freedom to all the people of South Asia. While President Clinton visits India, it is crucial that he bring up the issues of political prisoners, religious freedom, and self-determination.

There are also things we can do here in Congress. We should stop all American aid to India until these basic human rights are respected and we should declare our support for an internationally-supervised plebiscite on independence for Punjab, Khalistan, for Kashmir, for Nagaland, and for the other nations seeking to free themselves from India's brutal, corrupt rule. We must be prepared to take re-

sponsible measures to extend freedom to all the people of the world.

[From the Deccan Chronicle, Mar. 14, 2000]

SIKH FAMILY SAVES NUNS FROM BAWARIA ATTACK

New Delhi: A Sikh family saved the lives of five nuns who were attacked by a group of over ten armed men in the wee hours of the morning on 11 March, in Panipat. Putting their own safety at risk the male members of the family attacked the intruders armed with guns and steel rods who had entered the church where the Franciscan nuns were staying.

Answering to the alarm call of the nuns, the Sikh men immediately came to their rescue. The incident happened in Panipat in the convent of Our Lady of Grace. The Sikh family who have been staying in the Joti Nagar area next to the convent for over a decade, hearing the cries of the nuns and the alarm calls of the chowkidar, rushed to their help.

Armed with their licensed country made gun attacked the men. In the ensuing chaos the assailants attacked the Sikhs with steel rods and fired two rounds of gun shots. One of the Sikhs managed to nab one of the men, who in his desperation to escape bit him. Meanwhile the other gang members started firing from behind the church forcing the Sikhs to shoot back and attack them.

The nabbed man has been identified as Kala and belongs to the Bawaria caste. The gang is believed to be involved in the earlier attacks on the church. This is the fourth such attack in the past three months on the church in the Sonopath-Panipat Samalkha region.

The superior of the convent, Sr Vandana said, "We are very grateful to them for helping us, even though they could have been killed in the process. We will always remember them in our prayers."

Earlier a priest living in the same compound was attacked by unknown men a few weeks ago. As a result, two police guards were posted outside the church compound which houses a church, and quarters for the priest and nuns.

The police removed the guards from duty and within two days of this the church was attacked again. Recalling the incident Sr Vandana said, "Though convent houses six nuns, one of them was not present at the time of the incident. The men scaled the compound wall, broke open the main wooden entrance of the convent and then tried to break in the door of the dormitories where the five nuns were sleeping. The shocked and panic struck nun rushed into the smaller rooms and bathroom, where they locked themselves. The men later broke open an almirah." The Sonopat-Panipat Samalkha region had reported spate of violence which included attack on a priest who narrowly escaped and threatened several nuns. The area also witnessed four cases of dacoity.

Earlier two cases of dacoity had taken place in Samalkha and Panipat within three days of each other. In Samalkha in the early hours of March 9, 2000, gang of ten men raided and looted the Ish Mata Church and made off with Rs 60,000 kept for refurbishing the church. Fr Azeem Raj of the church escaped by locking himself in the bathroom. On 1 January Fr Vikas of Panipat Church was seriously injured and his skull and limbs fractured when he was attacked by a gang of armed men. This incident took place in the same compound where the nuns were attacked.

The district collector of the Panipat, Sandeep Garag said, thanked the Sikhs for the help and has advised that the guards be posted back to the church and more arms be sanctioned.

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE JAMES BLISS

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor a long time friend and community member. James Bliss served his community well as a long time for-ester for the Department of California Forestry.

James was born in Portland, Oregon. He lived in Monterey County for over twenty-five years, during which time he attended Monterey High School and went on to study in California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. My father, former State Senator Fred Farr, helped to get him his first job as a seasonal firefighter with the California Department of Forestry. He then went on to serve for thirty-four years with the Department of Forestry, retiring as Deputy Chief for Command and Control in the Sacramento headquarters. His loyalty and integrity were recognized in an article by the San Francisco Examiner hailing him as "The Cool Field General Whose Enemy was Fire." His career did not end there. After his retirement he went on to work as general manager of R.C.C. Consultants Inc.

James will be forever remembered by dear family and friends. He is survived by his wife, Annette; his son, James Shelby; his daughter, Shannon Dudek; his brother, Todd Bliss; his sister, Teri Cotham; and his father, Edwin Bliss.

HONORING MR. ALFRED SZALA

HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to honor a truly dedicated public servant, Mr. Alfred A. Szala, the registrar for the town of Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

Mr. Szala has been a member of the Dartmouth Board of Registrars for 51 years and its chairman for over 30 years. He and his wife, Cecilia, have been happily married for 55 years and are proud to call Dartmouth, Massachusetts, home.

For a half-century, Mr. Szala has honorably served the people of Dartmouth. He has witnessed many elections over the past five decades and strongly believes it is everyone's civic responsibility to vote. His life has been dedicated to community service and he is a true role model for the next generation of leaders.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I honor Mr. Szala in the United States House of Representatives. He has given so much back to his community and for this we are all very grateful. Best wishes to him and his wonderful family.